

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY ARGUES FOR DISASTER AID FOR FARMERS

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today participated in the 2002 National Drought Summit and introduced one of the panelists, a farmer from Hinchey's congressional district. In his remarks, Hinchey explained the severe damage that New York's economy has suffered as result of late freezing and the subsequent drought.

"Crop losses reverberate well beyond the farm," said Hinchey. "Agriculture is a \$3 billion industry in New York State. It's the engine that drives our upstate economy. Agriculture-related businesses such as farm supply stores, implement dealers and local retail businesses are all suffering as a result of the bad weather."

A member of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, Hinchey led the effort this year to provide disaster assistance for specialty crop farmers like apple growers. His amendment to the fiscal year 2003 agriculture spending bill was defeated by a narrow margin in committee. Hinchey is working with his colleagues to enact a disaster assistance package before the end of the year. Today he chided the Republican leadership and the Bush Administration for impeding progress on the appropriations legislation that would include disaster assistance.

"I plan to offer my amendment again if the Agriculture Appropriations bill ever makes it to the House floor," Hinchey added. "The Senate has attached a broader disaster relief measure to their Interior spending bill. Both of these bills are bogged down in Congress for reasons that have nothing to do with disaster assistance, but everything to do with election year politics."

Hinchey introduced Rod Dressel as one of the panelists at the summit. Dressel and his father grow, pack, and ship apples on their 300-acre farm in New Paltz. He is a former member of the board of the New York Farm Bureau and an active participant in the Hudson Valley Fruit Growers Task Force. The task force was formed in May to coordinate a lobbying effort for agricultural disaster assistance by a group of growers in the Hudson Valley who lost their apple crop.